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Written statement* submitted by the European Centre for Law and Justice / Centre Européen pour le Droit et la Justice, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Atrocities being carried out against Christians and take action to put an end to it

1. INTRODUCTION

Within Nigeria exists one of the deadliest and cruellest Islamic terrorist organizations, Boko Haram. The governor of the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno, Kashim Shettima, estimates that '[t]he Boko Haram insurgency has led to the deaths of almost 100,000 persons' with '2,114,000 persons [having] become internally displaced as [of] December of 2016, . . . 537,815 in separate camps' and another '158,201 . . . at official camps'[1]. Boko Haram targets Christians, and anyone else whom it sees as a threat to the establishment of an Islamic State.

In addition to the deadly attacks by Boko Haram, there are reports of growing conflict in the central regions of Nigeria between the predominately Muslim Fulani herdsman and the predominately Christians farmers. The Fulani Herdsman have begun attacking Christian farmers, destroying homes, churches, and even kidnapping Christians school girls in order to marry them to Muslim men[2].

We respectfully call to this Council's attention that, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the very purpose of the United Nations is to 'maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to *take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace*, and for the suppression of acts of aggression . . .'[3]. In addition, under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ('Genocide Convention'), '[a]ny Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the *prevention and suppression of acts of genocide*'[4].

It is clear that Boko Haram and groups such as the Fulani Herdsman pose a growing threat to Christians and others. This Council must swiftly mobilise in order to prevent these atrocities from escalating to the scale of those atrocities that we have seen occur in both Iraq and Syria. The time for action is now.

2. BACKGROUND

Nigeria, which is proving to be increasingly unsafe for Christians, is largely split between the predominately Muslim north and the predominately Christian south. Within the southern regions Christians experience religious freedom; however in the northern and central regions Christians face a true threat from Islamic militant groups such as Boko Haram and increasingly from Fulani herdsman, a group of Islamic nomadic herders[5].

Boko Haram has pledged allegiance to ISIS and utilizes its tactics of mass killings and kidnapping to instil fear and to intimidate. Its goal is to create an Islamic State, and Christians and other religious minorities are targets.

1Sani Tukur, *Shocking Revelation: 100,000 Killed, Two Million Displaced by Boko Haram Insurgency, Borno Governor Says*, PREMIUM TIMES (13 Feb. 2107), https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/223399-shocking-revelation-100000-killed-two-million-displaced-boko-haram-insurgency-borno-governor-says.html.
2Ewelina U. Ochab, *Trump may not be Wrong on the Fulani Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria*, FORBES (4 May 2018, 10:16 AM), https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2018/05/04/trump-may-not-be-wrong-on-the-fulani-herdsmen-crisis-in-nigeria/#6b34945555ef.
3U.N. Charter art. 1, para. 1 (emphasis added).
4 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, art. VIII, Dec. 9, 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277.
5*Nigeria*, Open Doors, https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/nigeria/ (last visited 23 May 2018).

Boko Haram's atrocities have no limit. Horrific examples of its cruelty include: executing 59 boys in their sleep and burning down their school[6], utilizing mob violence to target Christians, and using fake preachers to massacre innocent worshipers[7]. These and countless other acts of terror and senseless sectarian violence provide an example of the gruesome and dehumanising atrocities targeting Christians and others who are vulnerable.

Children especially are at risk. According to a UNICEF report, in 2017 alone, '83 children [were] used as 'human bombs'; 55 were girls, most often under 15 years old; 27 were boys, and one was a baby strapped to a girl'[8]. Young girls – as young as eight – are the most common victims, with one in every five Nigerian suicide bombers being a child[9].

However, Boko Haram is not the only group that poses a threat to Christians living in Nigeria. It is estimated that since 2001 approximately 60,000 Christians have been killed at the hands of the Fulani Herdsman and are motivated by religious and ethnic prejudice[10].

In April of 2018, Fulani herdsman carried out an attack during Mass at a Church located in Central Nigeria. The attacks resulted in the death of 2 priests and 17 parishioners[11]. Community resident Terhemen Angor described the horrific scene:

> People started scampering and wailing. 19 persons, including Reverend Fathers Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha, who were gunned down in cold blood, while many sustained injuries, including bullet wounds. After attacking the church, the invaders descended on the community and razed over 60 houses, farmland, food barns, after carting away what people had in their barns[12].

A few days later, vicious radical Islamists wearing camouflage and carrying AK-47s – described as 'herdsmen' – pillaged Christian villages and burned down as many as 160 homes. The terrorists left a trail of at least 39 murdered Christians in their wake[13]. These were not random attacks. Scores of innocent people were murdered because of their Christian faith within a couple of days.

6*Nigerian Boarding School Attack by Boko Haram Gunmen Leaves 59 Pupils Dead, Officials Say*, ABC NEWS (25 Feb. 2014, 9:49 PM), http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-26/scores-dead-in-boko-haram-nigeran-school-attack/5284250.

7Jessica Chasmar, *Boko Haram 'Fake Preachers' Slaughter 45 Worshippers*, THE WASHINGTON TIMES (5 June 2014), https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jun/5/boko-haram-islamists-pose-preachers-slaughter-45-w/.

8Press Release, UNICEF, Use of Children as 'Human Bombs' Rising in North East Nigeria (22 Aug. 2017), *available at* https://www.unicef.org/media/media_100686.html.

9Stefan Heunis, *Boko Haram Using More Children as Suicide Bombers, Unicef Says*, NEW YORK TIMES (12 Apr. 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/13/world/africa/boko-haram-children-suicide-bombers-unicef-report.html?mcubz=3.

10Lindy Lowry, *In Nigeria, 39 Killed in Fulani Herdsmen Massacres—Christians Cry Out 'Enough Bloodshed'*, OPEN DOORS (2 May 2018), https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/in-nigeria-39-killed-in-fulani-herdsmen-massacres-christians-cry-out-enough-bloodshed/.

11Kate Sheelnutt & World Watch Monitor, *Nigerian Mass Becomes a Massacre: Herdsmen Kill 18 Worshipers, Adding to Hundreds of Victims*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (25 Apr. 2018, 12:34 PM), https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/april/nigeria-fulani-attack-catholic-church-benue-boko-haram.html.

12Bukola Adebayo, *Nigeria Church Attack Leaves 19 Dead, Including Two Priests*, CNN (25 Apr. 2018), https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/24/africa/nigeria-church-attack/index.html.

13Stoyan Zaimov, *Some 39 Nigerian Christians Massacred, Houses Burned Down in Violent Rampage*, CHRISTIAN POST REPORTER (27 Apr. 2018, 7:06 AM), https://www.christianpost.com/news/some-39-nigerian-christians-massacred-houses-burned-down-in-violent-rampage-223425/.

The President of Nigeria, Buhari, condemned these attacks stating, 'Violating a place of worship, killing priests and worshippers is not only vile, evil, and satanic, it is clearly calculated to stoke up religious conflict and plunge our communities into endless bloodletting'[14].

The government of Nigeria as well as the International Community must take action now to ensure that no more innocent lives are lost. All of Nigeria's citizens must be protected.

3. REQUEST

Clearly, horrific acts of aggression are violating the peaceful lives of Christians in Nigeria. In order to prevent further loss of life, a massive humanitarian crisis, and to end increasing religiously motivated violence, we must act now. The U.N. Charter calls on the U.N. to *remove* threats to peace, and the Genocide Convention calls on the U.N. to *prevent* acts of genocide not merely to respond to genocide. We have seen in Iraq and Syria what happens when the U.N. fails to take preventive measures when it is clear that mass atrocities are being carried out against a particular group of people. This is the only the beginning. If meaningful action is not taken now the problem in Nigeria will worsen. ISIS and ISIS affiliate groups, like Boko Haram, have shown their resiliency time and time again. When they are forced out of one area they flee in order to regroup and fight another day[15].

Action must be taken to not only stop the spread of violence within Nigeria but also the spread of violence in west Africa. Boko Haram has in fact already begun carrying out attacks in neighbouring Chad[16] and Cameroon[17].

This is why we respectfully request that this Council work with government of Nigeria in order to protect the people who are vulnerable to attack by preventing further attacks, prosecuting those who are responsible for these brutal atrocities, and providing aid and assistance to the victims.

14*Nigeria's President Decries 'Satanic' Massacre of 18, Including Two Priests, in Catholic Church*, South China Morning Post, (25 Apr. 2018, 2:20 PM), http://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/2143261/nigerias-president-decries-satanic-massacre-18-including-two.

15Tyler Hicks, *Resilience of ISIS and Its Branches*, New York Times (27 Oct. 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/world/africa/boko-haram-isis-nigeria-niger.html.

16*Nigeria's Boko Haram Militants Attack Chad for the First Time*, BBC News (13 Feb. 2015), http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31453951.

17*Suspected Boko Haram Fighters Kill 11 in Cameroon*, Aljazeera (25 Aug. 2017), https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/suspected-boko-haram-fighters-kill-11-cameroon-170825145004120.html.